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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who alone rules the raging of the sea, we bow in awe and reverence before You. Even as we bow, we rejoice that Your mercy enables us to not be consumed in Your presence.

Strengthen our Senators for today's journey. In all the changing scenes of their lives, help them to bear in mind that You are an ever-present help for all their challenges. Lord, give to them the abiding awareness that nothing that disturbs their peace is too insignificant to bring to You. May these lawmakers live in the sure faith that Your love is stronger than all human rebellion and that You can empower them to live worthy of Your grace. At the end of this day, may they feel they have done their best and that You are pleased with their labors.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 12, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS, a Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BURRIS thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, we will be in a period of morning business for up to 1 hour. Senators will be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each during that time. The Republicans will control the first 30 minutes, the majority will control the second 30 minutes. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the credit card legislation. We will be in recess from 12:30 until 2:15 to allow for our weekly caucus luncheons.

One of the things I want to clear up, I announced yesterday that we would be having votes on Monday. To say I got a few phone calls is an understatement. When we announce that there

will be no votes, people schedule things. It is very difficult to undo those. By popular demand, we will not have any votes this Monday. I have spoken to the Republican leader. We think we can work together to accomplish what we need to anyway. We have a few things we need to do before we leave here next Thursday or Friday. I want everyone to know that the no-vote day is reestablished this coming Monday.

I filed cloture last evening on David Hayes to be Deputy Secretary of Interior. Under rule XXII, that vote will occur tomorrow morning. We may be able to work on an agreement to work around that in some way. We will certainly work with all colleagues to find out what we can do to work through that issue.

I have asked the Republican leader to speak first. I have something I have to do off the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

NO VOTE MONDAY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I say to my good friend the majority leader, I am sure his decision to stick with not voting on Monday was greeted with great pleasure on this side of the aisle as well.

GUANTANAMO

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, for the past several weeks, I have repeatedly expressed my concerns about the administration's decision to fix an arbitrary deadline on closing Guantanamo before it has a plan for the detainees. In my view, it was irresponsible for the administration to announce the closure of this safe and secure facility before it could assure the

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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American people that the alternative would be no less safe.

So far the administration's response to these concerns has been to simply assure people that any future transfer will not endanger Americans. Attorney General Holder says that detainees from Guantanamo would only be sent to American prisons if he is convinced that doing so won't impact the safety of the communities they are sent to. National Security Adviser Jim Jones has said the same thing. On Sunday, he said nothing would be done to make Americans, "less safe."

These assurances may be consoling to some. But Americans deserve more than vague assurances. They want to know which communities are being considered, and they want to know how the people who live in these communities would be affected by the arrival of terrorists. In short, Americans want the kind of assurances and specifics the Attorney General has evidently shared with foreign governments like he did recently on a trip to Europe, but not with the U.S. Congress.

News reports indicate that Alexandria, VA is a possible destination for some detainees from Guantanamo. A few years ago, when one of the 9/11 conspirators, Zacharias Moussaoui, was held in Alexandria, the jail had to set aside a unit of six cells and a common area just for him. Every time Moussaoui was moved to a nearby courthouse, he was transferred in a heavily armed convoy and the entire prison was locked down. And whenever Moussaoui was transferred to the courthouse, traffic was stopped due to security concerns, a major inconvenience to locals and local businesses.

These were the security requirements for just one terrorist. Now imagine duplicating these procedures many times over for multiple detainees from Guantanamo.

Based on its own past experience with Moussaoui, local officials in Alexandria are extremely concerned. The mayor of Alexandria said recently that he is "absolutely opposed" to detainees from Guantanamo going to Alexandria and that he would do everything in his power to stop it. Alexandria's sheriff is also unconvinced by the administration's claims. He said that if multiple detainees were sent to Alexandria, they could "overwhelm the system."

Congressman JIM MORAN, who represents Alexandria, is one of the few people who is open to the idea of domestic transfers. But even he admits the strain would be intense.

Yet what is even more worrisome to some officials at the local level is the prospect that any city which houses these detainees could become the target of a terrorist attack. The residents of Alexandria are concerned about it, and so are the residents of communities all across the country. I can assure you that Kentuckians don't want detainees from Guantanamo living anywhere within our borders, and I know that communities all over the country share the same concerns.

Already, State and local officials in places like Louisiana, California, and Mississippi have been introducing resolutions to stop these terrorists from being sent to their communities. In Virginia, the Stafford County Board of Supervisors has passed a resolution opposing the transfer of Guantanamo prisoners to the Marine base at Quantico. In Missouri, the legislature passed a resolution urging Congress to keep detainees out of the State.

Similar measures have been introduced or approved in other States, including California where Camp Pendleton is considered a candidate to receive detainees. Here in Washington, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are also raising concerns. When one Democratic Senator was asked about the possibility of detainees being sent to his State, he was blunt: "No way," he said, "not on my watch." Other Democrats have voiced serious concerns about the impact transferring detainees would have on their communities. They know about the experience of Alexandria during the Moussaoui trial, and they don't want it duplicated many times over in their own communities.

So there is strong bipartisan opposition to this proposal. I can't think of a congressional district in America that would welcome terrorists. Local communities want the administration to explain how transferring or releasing detainees won't make them, quote, "less safe". And the American people want the administration to explain its plans to their elected representatives in Congress.

Senator SESSIONS, the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, has now sent the Attorney General two letters asking what legal authority the administration has to release trained terrorists into the United States. He has yet to receive the courtesy of a response. Imagine that. The ranking member of the Judiciary Committee sent the Attorney General a letter pointing out that the law prohibits the transfer of terrorists to the U.S. soil, and he has not received a reply after two letters. Virginia Congressman FRANK WOLF sent a letter to the Attorney General in March regarding concerns he had with transferring Guantanamo detainees to Alexandria. He has since sent two more letters. The Attorney General has not responded to any of these requests.

Democrats are also demanding that the administration provide details for how it plans to deal with the terrorists at Guantanamo. Senior Democrats are now acknowledging that the administration simply doesn't have a plan and are asking the administration to provide one. Members of Congress have a responsibility to ensure the administration is not taking any actions that endanger the American people, and we have a responsibility to protect our constituents.

It is unacceptable that the Attorney General is willing to discuss details

about his plans for Guantanamo with foreign countries—foreign countries—but not with the American people or their elected representatives. Members of Congress deserve, and the American people expect, the administration to provide us with answers.

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, later today the trustees of the Social Security and Medicare trust funds will release their annual report which will give us an idea of the current and projected financial health of these programs. We do not know exactly what they will say, but we know the news will not be good. Everyone knows these programs are unsustainable under current conditions, and the problem is only getting worse.

Unfortunately, it is a problem the Democrats' budget does not address. Despite repeated calls from our side of the aisle, entitlement spending has been overlooked for far too long, and now it is completely—completely—out of control.

This is a fiscal crisis of the first order, and it is a crisis that cannot wait any longer to be addressed. Nearly 7 out of \$10 the Federal Government spends every year goes directly to mandatory spending on programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and the interest on the national debt. Soon enough, Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlements will consume about twice the percentage of the Federal budget they did four decades ago. If we do not get control over this spending soon, we will only have a fraction left for vital priorities such as defense, health care, transportation, and other job creators.

We must address the issue of entitlement spending now before it is too late. As I have said many times before, the best way to address the crisis is the Conrad-Gregg proposal, which would provide an expedited pathway for fixing these profound long-term challenges. This plan would force us to get debt and spending under control. It deserves support from both sides of the aisle.

The administration has expressed a desire to take up entitlement reform, and given the debt that its budget would run up, the need for reform has never been greater. So I urge the administration, once again, to support the Conrad-Gregg proposal. This proposal is our best hope for addressing the out-of-control spending and debt levels that are threatening our Nation's fiscal future. More than 800,000 Kentuckians receive Social Security benefits, and we need to make sure the program remains solvent not only for them but for their children and their grandchildren.

Today's report will underscore the urgent need for action, and Republicans stand ready to work with Democrats and the administration to meet that challenge.